

Fit For Travel

Story by Sara P. Shirley
Photos by Brandon Dill

In preparation for a return visit to Antarctica this November, Pink Palace Museum education manager Alex Eilers is stepping up her fitness game.

"Last time I went to Antarctica, I didn't really worry about getting in better shape," Eilers said. "This time, I'm taking boot camp classes beforehand because I know what the conditions are like."

Eilers experiences in Antarctica involve the research of Weddell seals. She was one of a select number of teachers chosen a couple years ago by the National Science Foundation to join researchers in Antarctica. The idea behind the project was to enable the teachers to spend two

months learning about the research so they could come back and communicate with students, and the general public, about the work being done. After her first trip, the scientist she worked with requested that she come back.

"I thought the first time I went that it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said Eilers. "I'm so grateful and excited to be able to go back."

This time around, Eilers is encouraging students and members of the community to take a "virtual" journey - to fitness and to Antarctica - with her. Eilers and the team at the Pink Palace calculated the distance from Memphis to Antarctica [as the crow

Additional PolarTREK Challenges

For more information on these interactive challenges, visit www.antarcticarevisited.com

- **Fly a Flag Over Antarctica:** Students decorate a flag based on a number of educational topics. Flags will accompany Alex Eilers to Antarctica. Eilers will fly them "on the ice," take a photo and return them to you.
- **Postcard from Antarctica:** Schools/Classes/Students design an Antarctica postcard. Postcards will be mailed back to you from Antarctica with an Antarctica indicia.
- **Scavenger Hunt:** Find the Weddell seals and Emperor penguins placed throughout the Natural History and Cultural History museum exhibits.

flies) to be 8,764 miles.

For every minute a "Get Fit Antarctica" challenge participant either exercises or studies, they will travel a mile on the virtual journey. The path will be lined with interesting tidbits about health, nutrition, exercise, science, math and social studies. To participate in the challenge, one has to simply register at the website www.antarcticarevisited.com.

The challenge ties in well with the museum's master plan, which includes an emphasis on health and wellness education in coming years, said Eilers.



Alex Eilers studied and measured Weddell seals in Antarctica during her first visit there in 2012. She uses a stuffed animal in her classroom at the Pink Palace Museum to teach others about her Antarctic experiences.

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